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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/PD (ANYASO, TITUS, LISENBY), AF/W (ACOOK)

AMEMBASSY PARIS FOR ARS (COWHER)
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: COTONOU GPRA REPORT ON THE DVC "PRESIDENT OBAMA'S FIRST 100 DAYS"

1. DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY:

On May 19, PAS Cotonou hosted a Digital Video Conference program entitled "President Barack Obama's First 100 days." The program began with opening remarks from PAO Rhonda Watson, followed by Africa Regional Services (ARS) Deputy Director Linda Cowher's welcome remarks and introduction of the Speaker, Dr. Lorenzo Morris.

After Morris' 20-minute presentation, guests participated actively by asking several questions, including the following: What will be the U.S. policy towards Africa during President Barack Obama's administration? What is President Obama's plan to promote development in Africa? What can the Beninese youth do to achieve change in Benin like President Obama is doing in the United States? What can the Obama administration do to provide immediate assistance to the poor and needy people of Africa? What is the policy of President Obama's administration with regard to the observation of elections in Africa? Will President Obama's administration pursue the AGOA program?

2. DATE: May 19, 2009 - Third quarter 2009.

3. JUSTIFICATION / OBJECTIVE:

The election of Barack Obama as the first African-American President of the United States generated a lot interest and hope in Benin. In Africa in general and in Benin in particular, people sincerely believe that President Barack Obama will bring change to Africa, that he will change their future prospects and impact the relations between the U.S. and Africa at the political and economic levels. Thus, the purpose of Benin's participation in this program was to make an assessment of what the new President was able to achieve in 100 days, and to examine if president Obama's first hundred days in the White House justifies the hope he has fostered.

4. MPP UMBRELLA THEME AND AUDIENCE REACHED:

Bolstering Democracy and Combating Corruption. 25 guests attended this program, including faculty members, members of the civil society, political activists, members of the AGOA committee, private media owners, journalists, members of President Barack Obama's local support committee, the Ambassador of the United States to Benin and the Deputy Chief of Mission.

5. RESULT/IMPACT: Excellent

This DVC program provided an opportunity to learn about the accomplishments of President Barack Obama during his first 100 days in office. According to Morris, despite his election during a period of war and world financial crisis, President Barack Obama took a number of measures and initiatives that constitute a source of hope and optimism for the international community. These initiatives include his plan for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq, a rescue plan to fight the world financial crisis, talks with the Latin American countries, immigration reforms, reinforcing humanitarian laws both in the United States and abroad, restoration of dialogue with the Muslim community, finding a sustainable solution to the Middle-East issue, the pursuit of the war against terror, and most importantly, the appointment of an experienced African-American as Deputy Secretary of State for African Affairs. During her presentation following the program, Ambassador Gayleatha

¶B. Brown answered questions and informed the audience that President Barack Obama is scheduled to make a major speech about his administration's policy towards Africa during his July 10 through July 11 visit to Ghana.

¶6. NON-USG SOURCES OF IN-COUNTRY FUNDING / IN KIND SUPPORT: None.

¶7. QUALITY OF U.S. SUPPORT AND OFFICE: Excellent.

Kudos to ARS Paris for recruiting such a knowledgeable speaker to address this topic. Professor Morris' presentation was accurate and he provided clear and understandable answers to our guests. Post experienced no major technical difficulties during the program, except that there was a lag time delay between when the Speaker started to speak and when we actually heard the words.
Rawlings